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SUBJECT: CENTRAL SULAWESI ON THE ROAD TO NORMALCY

¶1. SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY. THIS CABLE IS A JOINT REPORT FROM EMBASSY JAKARTA AND CONSULATE GENERAL SURABAYA.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a recent visit to Central Sulawesi's former conflict areas, Mission officers clearly saw the beginning of a return to normalcy. This was the fourth trip to Central Sulawesi by ConGen Surabaya officers in the last 2 years but it is the first time to the former conflict areas of Poso and Tentena without a police escort. Local police and civil society contacts in the cities of Palu, Poso, and Tentena were confident that the communal violence was over and attributed the attacks since the 2001 Malino Peace Accords to criminal acts of terrorism sourced to a small band of local Muslim extremists. Ethno-communal violence divided Christians and Muslims in the Poso regency and claimed over 1,000 lives in spates of fighting in 1999-2001. Burned out homes, churches and mosques remain throughout the Poso area as daily reminders of the past conflict, though we saw no obvious post-hostility finger pointing or rehashed grievances during any of our discussions. Contacts suggested that "s"ds were eager to break with the past and move toward reconciliation but lacked the means to fully rebuild their communities. Although the security environment has improved due primarily to the resolution of most of the recent terrorism cases and intercommunity relations were returning to normal, residents had many post-conflict issues to resolve an economic redevelopment, social reconciliation and healing remain a long-term prospect. END SUMMARY.

Recent GOI/Police Action Brings Respite to Violence  
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¶3. (SBU) GOI efforts since late 2005 have at least temporarily improved the immediate security environment and eased longstanding local frustration over Jakarta's perceived inattention to Central Sulawesi's security plight. Communal sectarian violence in the province broke out in 1999 with a series of increasingly violent events between local Muslim and Christian groups, including the highly publicized massacre of some 200 Muslims at the Walisongo pesantren and mosque by Christian militia groups. The two sides signed the Malino peace accords in 2001 but by 2004, Muslim extremists' groups were again terrorizing the Poso/Tentena region. In October 2005, the beheadings of three Christian girls was a turning point, shocking local residents and authorities in Jakarta. The reaction of President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla galvanized high level support for renewed INP action to address the violence with the formation of a special investigation taskforce in late 2005.

¶4. (SBU) Since that time, the INP has successfully arrested dozens of terrorist suspects, including the May 2006 arrest of Poso Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) cell leader Hassanudunn, which provided important information on the group's active in Central Sulawesi. Several failed INP attempts in late 2006 to lure suspects out of hiding led

to a tactical shift by INP investigatos" to conduct a more public campaign to explain tee cases against the top Tanah Runtuh and Kayamana figures sought by the INP. This approach ultimately secured the support of local community leader and culminated in the January 2007 INP raids one xtremist strongholds, when 24 of the 29 most watted TR members were captured or killed. Of the fiv TR leaders who eluded capture, one was killed in a subsequent JI stronghold raid near Yogyakarta and INP believes the others are no longer in Central Sulawesi.

#### Police and Political Leaders Show Support

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15. (SBU) Our Muslim contacts in Poso applauded the January 2007 crackdown and appeared well-informed by the INP on the details of the raids and the background of those involved. Members of the Malino Working Group (MWG) and the Poso Muslim Cleric's Council (MUI) told us that they not only supported the police operations but felt that they were long overdue. They criticized the INP as overly concerned about political and social ramifications of aggressively going after these "criminal" groups.

16. (SBU) Central Sulawesi Police Chief Brigadier General Badrodin Haiti received high marks from local contacts since his arrival last September. Haiti told us he had focused on building relationships in the former conflict area since he arrived and made monthly visits to meet with local leaders. Amran Amir, a local reporter with the Association of Independent journalists, noted that Haiti was much stronger and more proactive than his predecessors and he complimented Haiti for strong action against the Tanah Runtuh extremists. Haiti had an excellent reputation within the INP and was close to National Police Chief General Sutanto, according to INP contacts. Deputy Chief INP Investigator (D/CID) Gories Mere told us that he personally recommended to Sutanto last year that Haiti

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replace Brigadier General Oegroseno, whose handling of the Tibo execution case and terrorism cases had frustrated Sutanto.

#### Returning to Normal but Tensions Remain as IDPs Come Home

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17. (SBU) Our contacts pointed out significant improvements in the daily lives of Poso and Tentena residents since the crackdown on the Tanah Runtuh group earlier this year. Several contacts expressed surprise at how quickly normal relations had returned between Christians and Muslims, including business and trade at the central marketplaces in Poso and Tentena, both of which were hit by terrorist bombings in 2004 and 2005 respectively. We counted 13 new mosques and churches under construction on the road from Poso to Tentena. The largest Christian church in Poso recently reopened after being closed for over seven years due to security issues. Fadli, Director of the Poso Center for Conflict Resolution and Peace, told us he receives multiple calls per day from displaced Poso residents wanting to return home after hearing about the improving security situation.

18. (SBU) While our contacts were thrilled with the tremendous improvement in the security situation and more normalized relations between local Christians and Muslims, they warned that these positive changes mask lingering resentment and distrust that has impeded final settlement of the conflict. A potential flashpoint for this is in local land disputes. A key component of final reconciliation is the return/resolution of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the concurrent land ownership disputes. MWG contacts told us that as a result of the Poso conflicts, there were an estimated 5,962 IDP families (or around 25 - 30,000 persons) that may need to return to their original land/homes. Many of them have been in IDP camps in Manado, Parigi, Donggala and Palu for several years, although some have permanently resettled in those areas. Protestant Synod members told us that at the height of the violence there were as many as 50,000 IDPs in Tentena, a number they said was now around 10,000.

19. (SBU) Among the thousands of families who have already returned

to the Poso/Tentena area, many lack employment or funds to rebuild, and many have returned to find new occupants claiming ownership of their land. There are no accurate records kept of land ownership in the regency and only a small percentage of land owners have legal certificates documenting their ownership. Our contacts expressed the need for an impartial arbitration body to help quickly and fairly settle land disputes or there could easily be more flares of violence. Although the GOI has funded the construction of some homes for returning IDPs, our contacts were unhappy that the TNI-controlled construction contracts had not gone to local firms, leading to accusations of graft and illegal logging by TNI members.

¶10. (SBU) Our contacts worried that many residents remained traumatized from years of violence and angry over the lack of compensation for lost property and the limited GOI assistance provided. There are still dozens of burned out churches and mosques and thousands of destroyed homes left behind reminding locals of the conflict. Both the INP and local conflict resolution centers told us that a trauma center in Poso was urgently needed to help foster post-conflict healing, including overcoming any lingering disharmony and suspicion, particularly as the IDPs return and attempt to reassimilate into the community.

#### Residents Point to Outsider Role in Area's Violence

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¶11. (SBU) The Christians and Muslims we met equally acknowledged that outside militant groups from both sides had fanned the early conflict and that Muslim extremists from outside the area had played a critical role in orchestrating the attacks over the last several years. Christian Synod leaders in Tentena noted that the influence of these outside groups was initially overlooked at the height of tensions, but said that local religious and civic leaders now worked together to filter out these radical external influences. Local MWG and MUI members told us that Poso's Nadlahtul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Al Khairat organizations, in an effort led by MUI, had recently agreed to reject the fundamentalist teachings supported by the local Tanah Runtuh and Kayamanya groups they acknowledged as behind the area's violence.

¶12. (SBU) Adnan Aarsal, the main Muslim leader in Tanah Runtuh and the father-in-law to detained JI-cell leader Hasanuddin, owns the Al Amanah pesantren which was the base for the Tanah Runtuh group. He actively countered the INP's efforts last year to apprehend the suspects on the INP's most wanted list, but his cooperation just prior to the January INP raids has kept him out of INP detention. Most of our contacts were defensive of accusations that Aarsal was

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involved in the terrorism linked to the group. Even some INP contacts sympathetically regarded Aarsal as someone who had been duped by several hard core JI-linked extremists from Java, most of whom he hosted as teachers at his school.

¶13. (SBU) Several of our contacts who personally knew Aarsal told us that prior to 2000, he was much more moderate and only adopted more radical views after the May 2000 Walisongo Pesantren tragedy, and following a subsequent visit by JI network cofounder Abu Bakar Baasyir. (Note: An INP officer in the precinct nearest the Walisongo pesantren told us that Aarsal's family owned the land where the burned-out mosque and school now stand and that there were family gravesites nearby. However, our other contacts could not confirm this information.)

¶14. (SBU) Evidence connecting extremists at Aarsal's school with many of the area's terror attacks led to the closure of his Al Amanah Pesantren in February as a prerequisite to GOI construction of a new "modern" pesantren located several kilometers outside the city of Poso. An INP official commented that the GOI had learned a lesson from the strategic position of Al Amanah in the Tanah Runtuh residential area and intentionally selected the location for the new school away from residential areas and yet easily accessed from the main coastal road northwest of Poso. Also as part of the GOI agreement, Aarsal will not be allowed to have any role in the new

school, according to local MUI contacts who told us that Aarsal was spending his time in his now empty school with two of his remaining teachers, Ustad Ahmad and Ustad Fabian. (Note: We drove past Al Amanah during a brief visit to the Tanah Runtuh neighborhood and there was no visible evidence of any activity at the school.)

¶15. (SBU) Though trees had barely been cleared for the GOI's new school after an early May opening ceremony attended by President Yudhoyono, local MUI officials told us the new chair was already identified as the locally elected Deputy Regent (Wakil Bupati) Abdul Muthalib Rimi. The GOI has announced that the school will be modeled after the Gontor Pesantren in Ponorogo, East Java. In fact, during our visit to the site we saw a large sign that announced the construction of the school and that Gontor would serve as the school's model. (Note: Gontor is a modern pesantren in East Java that follows the public school curriculum, although the Islamic studies section remains the biggest. Students learn English in addition to the usual emphasis on Arabic. The Gontor pesantren boasts alumni that include many prominent Indonesian Muslim figures such as Nahdlatul Ulama Chairman Hasyim Muzadi, Muhammadiyah Chairman Din Syamsuddin, late moderate intellectual Nurcholish Madjid, and JI's Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.)

#### JI Still Seeks Control Over Former Conflict Areas

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¶16. (SBU) Poso Police Chief Adeni Muhan told us that the INP believed that Central Sulawesi remained a major component of the JI network's broader strategy to gain a foothold in the province that would serve as a training ground and a secure home base. Recent INP investigations, he said, exposed several JI trained Muslim teachers (ustad) from Java who spent years in the Poso area forging a network of local recruits. Although some of these JI ustad, such as Mahmud and Rian, were killed in INP operations, many remain at large and may have returned to Java after the January INP operations. Others, he said, may have also returned to former conflict areas in Ambon or Maluku. Though actively sought by the INP, the Deputy Chief of the local CT Detachment 88 explained to us that these JI ustad were not on the INP's most wanted list to keep them from going even deeper underground and to avoid provoking the Muslim community by targeting Muslim "teachers." The March INP raids in Java further confirmed links between the Java and Sulawesi terrorist networks, for example the Central Java arrest of Mujadid (aka Brekele), a primary suspect in the May 2005 Tentena market bombings.

#### Community Policing Produces Mixed Results

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¶17. (SBU) Since last year, the INP's Community Police (Polisi Masyarakat or POLMAS) has been a core component of the current INP strategy to better engage with Poso's residents. General Haiti explained to us that the INP began a pilot project in April 2006 that placed a POLMAS post in each of Poso's 150 sub districts (desa). Internal INP documents indicated that a total of 657 INP officers (approximately 4-5 per post) were assigned to the POLMAS project in the Poso area. Haiti said this program was designed to decrease INP response time, help the INP keep better tabs on the area's trouble spots and identify and monitor new arrivals or groups.

¶18. (SBU) We met with INP officers at all levels throughout much of the Poso area and they all independently identified the POLMAS

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program as the INP's key initiative in the area. The INP intelligence officer at the Lage police precinct that covers the area around the former Walisongo pesantren accompanied us on a driving tour of his area and pointed out some of the precinct's 14 POLMAS posts. He later provided us a copy of a detailed set of instructions they received from INP Headquarters that outlined standards for monitoring and evaluating the precinct's 60-70 POLMAS officers. He said they routinely submitted reports on the POLMAS posts to the INP's Poso District Headquarters and the INP's Provincial Headquarters in Palu.

¶19. (SBU) The POLMAS project, however, has not been without its

problems. We met with some INP officers who admitted that the project's roll out last year lacked any real funding. Most POLMAS posts were placed in houses abandoned during the conflict and lacked their own facilities and basic equipment. For example, each of the 14 POLMAS posts in the Lage precinct were given four cots, a cell phone, a megaphone, a camera, and a motorcycle.

¶20. (SBU) Several of our contacts outside the police commended the concept behind the POLMAS project but said the young, inexperienced officers assigned to the local posts were from other parts of Indonesia and lacked an understanding of the local culture. Some local residents had accused local POLMAS officers of public drinking, fighting, and sexual assault. Mrs. Syamsiah of the Poso Inter-Faith Communications Forum told us that the young INP officers from the POLMAS post near her mosque in Tentena had routinely taken the money donated to the mosque during Friday prayer services.

#### Full Reconciliation a Long Term Prospect

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¶21. (SBU) Conspiracy theories posited by some of our contacts, as well as isolated remarks made during our discussions, also suggested that post-conflict sensitivities and a general paranoia remained just below the surface despite the area's significantly less polarized communities and improved security. Reverend Onesimus Kambodji, a former Golkar party member of the provincial legislature (DPRD) and head of the Poso Inter-Faith Communications Forum, was convinced that GOI security forces were not only behind the original hostilities but some of the recent terrorist attacks, including the October 2005 beheadings; he cited statements attributed to the Christian schoolgirl who survived the attack that a man in uniform was present during the killings.

¶22. (SBU) Though most conspiracy theories seemed far fetched, the sincere acceptance of them by many local residents suggested a lingering distrust of GOI security forces, probably supported by a long-standing perception by residents on both sides of the conflict of an imbalanced legal process. Several of our contacts confirmed that residents felt victimized by the legal process. Conflict resolution groups in both Palu and Poso told us that the consistent application of the law must be a centerpiece of any reconciliation strategy.

¶23. (SBU) An internal INP document we received likewise acknowledged injustice as a driving factor and indicated that INP detainees had revealed that revenge for perceived injustices, particularly the May 2000 Walisongo pesantren incident, had been a powerful motivator for the local extremists. As noted above, the Walisongo killings (also known as the "Kilometer 9" incident because of where it occurred along the road between Poso City and Tentena) was cited by local contacts as a turning point for Arsal. Basri, one of the top local terrorists arrested in February, has said publicly that he was also significantly influenced by his experience at the Walisongo pesantren, where he helped remove the bodies immediately after the attack.

¶24. (SBU) Several contacts told us that the sense of injustice within the Muslim community stems from language agreed to in the 2001 Malino Accords that resulted in charges not being brought for attacks prior to the Accords, which includes the majority of Christian-on-Muslim violence. In the internal police document, the INP proposed that the signatories to the original Malino Accord renegotiate the agreement to allow the INP to open cases on the pre-2001 incidents that most enflame the local Muslim community.

¶25. (SBU) This deep sense of injustice has further motivated the INP to use its softer CT techniques to handle the local Poso extremists. INP investigators told us that nearly half of those arrested in January were released in part to show that the INP was focusing on the top extremist figures. Based on our discussions, we learned that as many as 15 of those released were placed on probation under the charge of local INP precincts, which required them to report twice a week and participate in group meetings to deprogram their antisocial and radical leanings. According to INP records, some of those placed on probation included Nasir, Ateng Marjo, Yasin Lakita (aka Acin), Ayi Lakita, and Upik Kokong.



However, INP investigators told us that this program was poorly funded and admitted that little was done to ensure that the local precincts maintained contact with the suspects after the first several weeks.

¶26. (SBU) We were told that the Christian community was closely watching the trials of the 17 local Christian suspects accused of killing two Muslims last September. The two Muslims were killed during widespread demonstrations surrounding the execution of three Christians convicted of orchestrating the killings of Muslims in the early days of the conflict. The local Christian community was keenly aware of the sentences handed down last year to Hasanuddin and the other perpetrators of the October 2005 Christian schoolgirl beheadings, and Rev. Kambodji told us he hoped the sentences were commensurate with the nature of the crimes (meaning that the sentences of the 17 suspects would not approach the 20-year sentence that Hasanuddin received). The sentence hearings for the 17 Christian suspects were expected by mid-June.

#### Communities Eager for Recovery But Lack Funding

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¶27. (SBU) Our trip came just one week after Indonesian President Yudhoyono visited the former conflict areas to symbolically roll out a GOI assistance package to help in the province's recovery. The President's visit was a tribute to the improved security situation and his public pledges of aid signaled Jakarta's good intentions. Yudhoyono publicly stated the need for the central government to facilitate Poso's healing process and announced that Jakarta had earmarked Rp 56 billion (approximately \$6 million) for economic development. We could not confirm if this figure includes the Rp 27.5 billion (approximately \$3 million) the GOI had promised to allocate for development projects in the province, including the new Poso pesantran and the extension of a Poso theology institute.

¶28. (SBU) It was clear from our discussions that this type of promised economic development will be a key to recovery, reconciliation and maintaining a lasting peace. Some recovery has naturally occurred and businesses appeared active throughout the former conflict zone and the surrounding fields were in various stages of cocoa and rice production. However, the level of economic activity remained far below that of the late 1990s. Our contacts agreed that access to capital, in particular micro lending programs, would allow residents and IDPs to rebuild and pushed that as a key feature of any potential assistance.

¶29. (SBU) Contacts also complained that the GOI promised \$6 million from the Malino accords to rebuild housing and help restart businesses but that much of those funds have not been delivered. Examples abound of misappropriation of GOI relief funding for the area's displaced persons, which has universally frustrated residents. Several local religious and political leaders have been accused of pocketing the funds, including former Synod leader Father Damanik. Pleas for international assistance in rebuilding the region's economy, infrastructure, agricultural business, and job-skill training were a feature of nearly all our discussions. Christian Synod leaders in Tentena told us they had not yet received promised GOI funding for at least part of a \$3 million university construction project, though Yudhoyono attended the groundbreaking during his visit, and said they hoped that international donors and Christian organizations would provide additional assistance.

#### Comment

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¶30. (SBU) It remains difficult to gauge the Yudhoyono Administration's commitment to Central Sulawesi reconstruction. There has been increased attention and promises of assistance but so far little follow through. A few weeks after the President's visit, we asked senior Administration staffers about the presidential decree mentioned by Yudhoyono and they were not aware of any such document in the works related to Poso reconstruction. Local residents seemed surprisingly indifferent about the President's visit and did not seem to hold out much hope that Jakarta would send the needed assistance. Locals seemed to respect both Yudhoyono and Kalla and remembered them for their role in negotiating an end to the early communal fighting. One contact commented that Kalla was

generally regarded as opportunistic and was noted locally for his involvement in a scheme related to a dam project between Poso and Tentena.

131. (SBU) The good news is that Central Sulawesi residents were optimistic about the future and were looking forward trying to reclaim their pre-1999 lives. We were mildly surprised to see how quickly the improved security situation was translating into increased economic activity. Much like the return to normalcy in Maluku, the determination by the INP to actively engage the troublemakers and terrorists has given Central Sulawesi residents a chance to regroup. However, unlike Maluku, we do not yet see real

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commitment to "peace at all costs" by the local people or leaders, who still chew on the real or perceived injustices of the last several years. The situation in Poso remains complex and will require a committed effort by national and local authorities to push economic development, equitable solutions to land disputes, and a more integrated law enforcement presence.

HEFFERN